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SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

26 August 1952

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 265

SUBJECT: Present Status of Kashmir Dispute

1. Cabinet ministers from India and Pakistan began meeting in Geneva on 25 August with Dr. Frank Graham, UN Mediator for Kashmir, in an attempt to resolve the remaining unagreed points in the program for demilitarization of Kashmir. The outstanding points of disagreement are the quantum of forces to remain on either side of the cease-fire line and the identity of the forces allowed to make up this number.

2. Demilitarization is a necessary prelude to the conduct of a plebiscite under UN auspices, which both parties have accepted in principle. The outcome of the Geneva meetings, however, will be conditioned less by strictly military problems than by India's estimate of the outcome of a plebiscite.

3. The Indian government has been dragging its feet on the demilitarization issue largely because of its conviction that a free plebiscite would result in accession of the entire area to Pakistan. With the exception of part of the province of Jammu, the population of the area is predominantly Moslem. Meanwhile, Kashmir's Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah—who is believed to fear that Pakistani control over the area would destroy his political position—has pushed through a radical land reform policy and has supported the abolition of the Hindu monarchy, steps which in time may give him the power to persuade the Moslem Kashmiris to vote for joining their state to India. However, despite the recent agreement between Nehru and Abdullah, there is no reason to believe that the Indian Government is yet convinced that Abdullah: (a) has consolidated his political position sufficiently to be able to obtain a vote for India; or (b) can be trusted to use his influence to gain a vote for joining India rather than to seek to achieve Kashmiri independence.

DOCUMENT NO. 19
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☒
☒ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 12/2/80 REVIEWER: 19360

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4. At the Geneva talks commence, therefore, India probably still believes that it would run a serious risk of losing the entire area in an early plebiscite. It is probable, therefore, that India will again attempt to stall in negotiations on demilitarization on the assumption that any step in the direction of agreement with Pakistan would weaken India's present position in Kashmir.

5. On the other hand, India would find it most difficult to justify its refusal to accept the generous Pakistani concessions on the demilitarization issue, either before world opinion or in the UN Security Council. Moreover, the Indian government must realize that failure of the Geneva talks will increase the risk that Pakistan will attempt to expell India from Kashmir by force. Thus, there is a slim possibility that India will agree to demilitarization at the Geneva meeting in the belief that subsequent negotiations on the terms of the plebiscite can be prolonged long enough to improve the chances of a favorable vote for India. India may also hope that negotiations on the plebiscite would lead to some other solution such as partition of the area. Whether or not India agrees on demilitarization at Geneva, the Kashmir dispute would remain far from settlement.

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